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# “Oranges and Lemons,” . .

an Old Ditty of . . .

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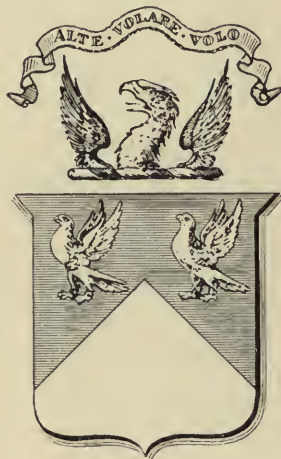


By J. B. Mitchiner, F.R.A.S.  
Citizen and Girdler.

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"Oranges and Lemons."



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Ye Postern, Tower Hill, since 1686, and latterly of  
Northumberland Alley, in the Citie of London . .*



HENRY MORSE STEPHENS





King's Weigh House.

## **“Oranges and Lemons.”**

*“Oranges and Lemons”*

*Say the bells of St. Clement's,*

*“Lend me five farthings”*

*Say the bells of St. Martin's,*

*“When will you pay me?”*

*Say the bells of Old Bailey,*

*“When I am rich,”*

*Say the bells of Shoreditch,*

*“When will that be?”*

*Say the bells of Stepney,*

*“I'm sure I don't know,”*

*Says the big bell of Bow.*



St. Clement's, Eastcheap.

*“ Oranges and Lemons ”*

*Say the bells of St. Clement's.*



HEN the body is busy with work of an automatic nature that makes scarcely any demand on the mind, it is not a little singular to what extent monotonous sounds, more particularly Bells, will sympathetically respond to the



surroundings, and lend a rhythm to the occupation.

St. Clement's Church, Eastcheap, in the Ward of Candlewick, situate in the vicinity of London Bridge, is now, and for many centuries has been, in the centre of the dried fruit trade. At almost any time of the year, as the traveller passes over London Bridge from the South, he may see scores of London porters, with the characteristic porter's knot over their shoulders, busily employed as a colony of ants, carrying from the steamers to the quay innumerable boxes of oranges and lemons. And, as hour after hour, they toil up the ladders with the loads on their shoulders, one can quite understand how in the sound of the neighbouring bells they would hear nought but the monotonous refrain:—

“Oranges and Lemons,

“Oranges and Lemons,

“Oranges and Lemons,” say the bells of  
St. Clement's.



St. Martin Orgar.

*"Lend me five farthings,"  
Say the bells of St. Martin's.*



THE St. Martin's of the rhyme has no connection with the well known church at Charing Cross, nor does it refer to St. Martin's Outwich, situated in Threadneedle Street. The St. Martin in question, and from which the lane where the church was

situated derives its name, was destroyed in the Great Fire of 1666 and never rebuilt. Martin's Lane runs from Cannon Street to Upper Thames Street; and on the left hand side of the lane, journeying towards Upper Thames Street, and nearly at the top of the hill, still stands the tower of the little church of St. Martin in the Vintry. And, what a very old London these lines recall ! Had we no other evidence, this couplet alone would serve to approximately determine the antiquity of this ancient nursery ballad. It tells of a time when that great Banking centre, Lombard Street, was either non-existent or had been too recently established to have succeeded in diverting the business or disturbing the vested interests of St. Martin's Lane. Previous to 1229 A.D., when Pope Gregory IX. sent his Lombards to England to open usury depots for lending money to convents, communities, and private persons, St. Martin's Lane, City, was the natural home of the money-lender and bill discounter. In the lines may be read the disappointment of the needy merchant, whose vain endeavour to melt his little bit of paper had probably met with the rebuff of the money-lender, "I wo'nt lend you five farthings," and as he slowly retraces his steps up the lane, little wonder the jangling of the bells re-echo the refrain that is uppermost in his mind :—

“ Lend me five farthings,  
“ Lend me five farthings,  
“ Lend me five farthings,” say the bells  
of St. Martin's.





St. Sepulchre, Old Bailey.

*“ When will you pay me ? ”  
Say the bells of Old Bailey.*



HERE our author grows pathetic. The exigencies of rhyme compel the selection of the name of the street, in lieu of the particular church, which, in this case, we are left to conjecture. But the con-



nection of the lines with the Court of the Old Bailey and the Fleet Prison hard-by, is obvious. Memories of the miseries of the "Fleet" hung over the spot for six centuries—from 1157 to 1729. In the latter year the result of enquiries by a Committee of the House of Commons, brought the warder, the deputy and the turnkey to condign punishment for cruelties practised on the unhappy persons committed to their keeping. The generation is rapidly passing that is cognisant of the debt of gratitude due to Charles Dickens, whose writings assisted in removing from the Statute Book the Act permitting imprisonment for debt. Embodied in the refrain lies a deep strain of pathos in the idea of the poor debtor incarcerated in the "Fleet" for a debt he may never hope to pay, hearing in the neighbouring Bells of the Old Bailey nought but the continuous dun of his creditor:—

"When will you pay me ?

"When will you pay me ?

"When will you pay me ?" say the bells of  
Old Bailey.



St. Leonard's, Shoreditch.

*"When I am rich,"  
Say the bells of Shoreditch.*



HE lines are satirical. Popular legend ascribes the origin of *Shoreditch* to the historical and tragic Jane Shore, who, equally legendary, was supposed to have perished in a ditch from hunger and neglect. But Jane Shore lived to be a very old woman, was

alive in the time of Sir Thomas Moore, and survived her good looks a great many years. For the origin of the name *Shoreditch* it is not necessary to go beyond the known fact that the lord of the Manor in 1343 was a Sir John de Sorditch, who lies buried in Hackney Church. The name is first found spelt *Shoreditch* in the reign of Henry VIII. At the date of the rhyme it consisted of but one farmhouse surrounded by a ditch running through the fens and passing Fen Church joined the Wall Brook at Old Gate (Aldgate), hence running down (Wallbrook) into the Thames. The Wall Brook surrounded the old city. From the North, the Old Bourne (Holborn), flowing South, passed into the Thames at Westminster by what is now Brook Street, forming at the junction with the Thames an island (Thorney Island), on which Westminster Abbey was erected. The Minster dedicated to St. Paul at the top of Ludgate Hill was known as the East Minster, and the Minster dedicated to St. Peter on Thorney Island, as the West Minster.

Another portion of this Old Bourne formed the Fleet ditch, running into the Thames at Blackfriars. A third portion ran East, passing the Alders Gate, Bishops Gate, Moor Gate and Cripples Gate, and joined the stream from Shoreditch at Ald Gate.

The leading characteristic of the Manor of Shoreditch, was its *poverty*. And this is the point of the satire:—

“ When I am rich,

“ When I am rich,

“ When *I* am rich,” say the bells of Shoreditch.





St. Dunstan's, Stepney.

*"When will that be?"*

*Say the bells of Stepney.*



HE satire of the Shoreditch bells evokes the sarcasm of those of Stepney; sarcasm, probably common to all the City districts, but which is left for Stepney to voice. Though a near neighbour,



Stepney, unlike Shoreditch, was a rising, thriving suburb of shipchandlers doing a fine riverside business in supplying the multifarious articles that go to the making up of a ship's stores. Neither too rich to ignore, nor too poor to care to be closely associated with its needy neighbour, Stepney voices the sarcastic enquiry:—

“When will that be?”

“When will that be?”

“When will that be?” say the bells of Stepney.





Bow Church, Cheapside.

*“I’m sure I don’t know,”  
Says the big bell of Bow*



AS one of the least important of London districts is made to ask the question, the richest of all of them is selected to reply to it. And there is in that reply, just a suspicion of snob-bishness. Of the contempt too often displayed

by the man on the coach towards the man who has to run by its side. "I'm sure I don't know" has an air about it of the impatient self-complacency too frequently associated with great wealth. The indifference, and suppressed contempt, of the successful towards the unsuccessful. "I'm sure I don't know," as if politeness, or policy, alone prevented the addition, "I'm sure I don't care." And too frequently with those who have secured for themselves a seat on the social coach, "I'm sure I don't know" comes to mean, "I'm sure I don't want to know."

"I'm sure I don't know,

"I'm sure I don't know,

"I'm sure I don't know," says the big bell of Bow.

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